11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

105 gathering society; it is extremely probable that a study of their daily life today is virtually equivalent to a study of their life as it was in ancient times.

231 241 177 So near are the Andamanese to their original state that they show no signs of ever having had any real agriculture. The Indian Government has tried in vain to induce the surviving Arioto to keep chickens by presenting them with birds and food for them; the gifts were accepted out of politeness, but there the matter ended. Among the remaining Negritos, however, particularly in the Philippines, there are noticeable signs of the awakening of some agricultural sense, even to the extent of some commerce, and regular attendance at markets. But on Little Andaman, for example, I saw in 1952 various ginger trees growing, brought there by some unknown means and at Entigheh there was also a pumpkin. In 1953 and subsequent years there were no pumpkins at all on the island, and although the gingers were still thriving they were clearly doing so by chance, without any attention from the Onges, who ate some of the small red fruit, and seemed to like the piquant flavour, but still showed no signs of wanting to perpetuate it. In several places both on the coast and inland I saw, too, clumps of the slender native bamboo, hardly planted intentionally; the ground sites of some huts now abandoned, like Bugheneh and Odadda, were covered in them. The inhabitants had apparently wanted to procure a supply of material for roofing mats, or the drying platforms used by a few groups, and so the plantations were completely stripped – and killed.

245 177 In order to plant coconut trees for the benefit of the islanders I had even to do the planting myself, so utterly ignorant were they of agricultural methods; we even had to do all the clearing of the undergrowth in a patch of forest, and prepare the ground. The Onges watched curiously but were quite uninterested. Why should they care for a tree for ten years to get its nuts when the island and seas around are teaming with food for the taking?

824 825 In their continual search for food the Onges have acquired botanical and zoological knowledge which seems almost innate, and they know of properties in plants and animals of which we are quite unaware. Nearly every day on Little Andaman I came across examples of this. I only had to draw a rough sketch of an animal and they knew at once where it could be found; it was only thanks